

ESU 1150

OHIO FARM LABOR:
Numbers, Hours, and Wages
1984

by

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Number of Workers

The number of workers on Ohio farms varies significantly with the season. Table 1 shows that during the summer months the number of people working on Ohio farms is nearly 2/3 greater than in the fall. Oddly enough, the greater numbers during the summer are not totally associated with hired labor, as one might expect. The number of self-employed persons was 35 percent greater during the summer and unpaid labor (presumably family) was 145 percent greater. It is difficult to rationalize the difference in the number of self-employed persons. Some of this difference is likely associated with farm operators that produce vegetable crops where all production and marketing work is completed by October. The greater number of unpaid persons during the summer is likely associated with children of farm operators being out of school and working at home. The greater number of paid workers during the summer is most likely associated with production labor needs for forage crops (hay), fresh and commercial vegetables, and small grain harvest.

Hours Worked

The number of hours worked per week by self-employed and unpaid workers was nearly the same during the summer and fall and averaged slightly less than 40 hours. Hired workers were reported to work more hours per week in the fall, nearly 40 percent more. The greater hours per week in the fall is likely

Table 1. NUMBER OF WORKERS ON FARMS
 OHIO FARM LABOR
 1984

	July	October
	- - - thousands - - -	
Self-Employed	54	40
Unpaid	27	11
Hired	39	22
All	120	73

Source of Data: "Farm Labor," Crop Reporting Board, Statistical Research Service, USDA, November 1984, Publication No. SpSy 8 (11-84).

the result of grain harvest activity that often continues from pre-dawn to late evening. The data in Table 2 does not seem to substantiate the common belief that farmers and their help, as a group, work more hours per week than their "city cousins." This of course would vary by type of farm and one must be careful how the data are interpreted.

Wages

The data in Table 3, surprisingly, indicate a slightly higher wage being paid to field workers in Ohio. Conventional wisdom would likely lead one to the opposite conclusion. It is commonly perceived, and correctly so, that livestock workers generally require a higher level of skill and management capability. Thus, the thought that their wage would probably be higher than for field workers. Keep in mind, however, that in Ohio many of the field workers are associated with labor intensive vegetable crops. In this environment labor is managed by crew leaders and is "pseudo-unionized" and likely results in a somewhat higher wage. Also, note that these are wages exclusive of perquisites (i.e. house, utilities, meat, milk, and etc.). It is probable that individuals classified as "livestock" workers are more likely, as a group, to receive a higher valued set of perquisites resulting in a somewhat lower acceptable wage. Note that all hired workers on Ohio farms average nearly \$4.50 per hour (plus any perquisites). This is considerably below the average wage earned by all workers in Ohio covered by Workers Compensation--approximately \$8.40 per hour in 1983.

Table 2.

HOURS WORKED PER WEEK
OHIO FARM LABOR
1984

	July	October
- - - hours per week - - -		
Self-Employed	38.9	38.3
Unpaid	37.1	37.8
Hired	28.1	38.8

Source of Data: "Farm Labor," Crop Reporting Board, Statistical Research Service, USDA, November 1984, Publication No. SpSy 8 (11-84).

Table 3. WAGE RATES FOR HIRED WORKERS
 OHIO FARM LABOR
 1984

	July	October
- - - dollars per hour - - -		
Type of Work		
Field	\$4.04	\$4.07
Livestock	3.84	3.76
Field & Livestock	4.00	3.98
Supervisory	----	7.72
Other	----	6.00
Method of Payment		
Hourly	4.27	4.30
Other	4.20	4.80
All Hired Workers	4.26	4.42

Source of Data: "Farm Labor," Crop Reporting Board, Statistical Research Service, USDA, November 1984, Publication No. SpSy 8 (11-84).

